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THE CHALLENGES OF GRADUATE SCHOOL

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By:

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Western Kentucky University
2013

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Approved by

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2013

ABSTRACT

For this project I produced and hosted a 30-minute in-depth interview/talk show program where I interviewed three students about the process of going through graduate school at Western Kentucky University. Two of my guests are currently going through graduate school at WKU while the third recently received his graduate degree. I discussed with each guest their respective fields and area of research. We talked not only about why they chose their field but how their work and their field affect society on a daily basis. We touched on the that impact at the local and national level. My goal for anyone viewing this show is to expand their knowledge about the process that students go through who attend graduate school, both the challenges and rewards.

Keywords: Broadcasting, WKU, Graduate School, Public Health, Geoscience, Sports Management, Interview, Talk Show

Dedicated to my family, especially to my grandfather Willie who showed me the
drive to work hard work

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis project would not have been possible without the people of WKYU-PBS. The professional staff gave me an opportunity of employment while I attended school at WKU that I couldn't have dreamt of. Through their help I was able to mold the other side of my skill set, production, from what I was learning in classes, news. It helped me continue the way I describe myself as well-rounded. The facilities at WKYU allowed me to learn and operate equipment of the latest innovation and best quality that I highly doubt would be available at any other university. I would like to thank the staff and student crew for all of their help.

I would also like to thank those fellow coworkers who were all students who were the behind the camera production crew. While they are never seen they all played a vital part in making sure the show went on without a hitch. I could not thank them enough for their help without hesitation.

I would like to thank Randy Herndon, my high school broadcasting teacher who brought me into the world of television and who gave a foundation of skills to build on.

Finally I would like to thank my family and friends who pushed me to be all that I can be. They are my inspiration and without them I don't know where I would be.

VITA

November 2, 1991.....Born – Murray, Kentucky

2010.....Graves County High School
Maysfield, KY

2010.....Western Kentucky University,
Bowling Green, KY

2010.....WKYU-PBS Production Staff

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Broadcast News

Minor Field: Geography

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” This quote was said by none other than Nelson Mandela. This is the very essence of what I wanted to accomplish with my show. I wanted to educate anyone who may see any part of or my entire program to have their eyes opened to the process of going to graduate school. Everyone discusses undergraduate degrees, both bachelor and associate. In May of 2010 the Huffington Post reported a Harvard and Asian Development Bank study that said 6.7% of the world’s population holds a college degree of some kind. While you may think that is insignificant, listen to this number; 475 million. That’s the number of people holding college degrees. For the longest time that has been the standard for getting a good job. It’s what I was told growing up. “Alex, go to college and you’ll get you a good job.” Now it seems that is not necessarily the case. Experts now wonder if that next level of education is becoming the new standard. Today the number of college graduates that are unemployed is growing so many of them are deciding whether to go back to school or not. Enter my show. I had two major purposes for my show going into putting it together: One, educate anyone who may watch a part of this show about the challenges, rewards, and the complete process of going to graduate school. I aimed at and succeeded in getting three guests from three completely different fields of study while managing to interview students from three fields of study that could easily relate to and directly connect to the

community of Bowling Green, Kentucky and in many ways communities like it across the country.

Those of you reading this may wonder, “For a broadcasting student he’s talking an awful lot about education. I wonder why?” Here is my answer to that question.

Through my experience that started at Graves County High School’s GCTV broadcasting program in Mayfield that has continued through my education here at WKU, to my internship at WPSD Local 6 News in Paducah, Kentucky, the essence of Television News broadcasting boils down to two aspects. The first of these is that News stations and their entire team are given the job of informing the citizens of their respective viewing audience to important information and event that impact them or matter to them. An argument can be made that the stories selected to air by each station are subjective, and that is true to an extent. Everyday news directors and producers are forced to choose which stories air and which don’t and how much time the stories that do air are allotted. The second of these aspects is telling the story of individuals and groups that are both interesting and/or unknown to the general public. Is it necessary for our lives that we know a soldier who has been missing for months shows up alive and returns home safe, or that a random stranger donates an organ to save a child’s life? The answer is no. However are stories like those worth telling? Without a doubt! It’s stories like those that make us forget our petty problems that are annoyances in comparison and then we smile and are thankful for what we have. Through stories like those we can if not for just a moment forget about the constant negativity we deal with. That is what the news is for. Coming up, I’ll discuss in depth how I went about preparing for the show and give an overview about each guest and what we talked about on the show. We’ll be right back after this.

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD TO THE MADNESS

As I grew up I learned very quickly what Murphy's Law was. For those of you that don't know, it is "anything that can go wrong will." I have faced and continue to face physical injury regularly in some obscure ways and things I need to get done always seem to pile up at the same time. It's part of life and I have learned to deal with it to the best of my ability. While you may say that is an awful way to look at life I say it's practical. Life's not fair, it makes its own rules as it goes and changes them whenever it feels like. Obeying this law allows me to follow a proverb of my family for generations. Prepare for the worst and hope for the best. With that said, let's talk about how the most important part of broadcasting pre-production. This part of process is everything that led up to me being on the on camera on the WKU platform set at WKYU. The idea for the subject of this project was the product of a discussion between me and my second reader on this project Cheryl Beckley, an Emmy winning producer at WKYU, about some of the very things I have already discussed such as the rising need for graduate degrees. With the idea in my head I went on to refine it into the show I created. The next thing in my mind was to find guests to interview for the show.

As soon as my topic for show was set in stone I knew one guest that I wanted, and that was my third guest on the show James Cottrell. I'll go more into why I chose all my

guests later. At the time this idea was conceived I was working on a news story about the Green River Grotto Club here at WKU. The Green River Grotto Club does work in caves in the area mapping them, documenting biodiversity and working on the conservation of those caves. I was working directly with Dr. Jason Polk a Geoscience professor here at WKU on this news story. After I came to decide on my CE/T topic I contacted him asking if there were any graduate students in his department that he believed would be up to being a part of my show. In just a few days' time he responded with the name Gillman Ouellette. The name rang a bell with me so I contacted him. When we met after corresponding via email I learned that we had indeed met before. Gil was the graduate teacher's assistant in my physical geography class. Gil agreed to be a part of the show and that was that.

So by the middle of February I had two of my three guests nailed down and was well on my way. And now we'll see the reason why I mentioned Murphy's Law at the start of this chapter. I began searching for my third and final guest for my show. I emailed several department heads and deans for ideas for my last guest. After a longer time than I expected I received a single email back redirecting me to the correct people to ask my question. I then resubmitted my request for a guest for a show, being sure to be clear what exactly I was looking for in a guest. The later part of March rolled around and I had yet received a response. At this point I knew I had to try a different approach. I found out where I could physically meet the people I was waiting on a response from hoping it would show more initiative with me taking to the time to see them in person. Thankfully one of the people I went to visit was willing to give a list of students to contact. I contacted all five of the students whose names I received. The first week of

April was here and I was still looking for my last guest and concern began to set in. April 3rd my concern was set at ease. After some questions to clarify my goals and purpose Lynnita Glass agreed to be a part of my show. So after three stages of communication I was finally able to receive my third guest. Now to why I chose these students as guests.

Lynnita is pursuing a degree in Public Health education. Anything tied to health and medicine is immediately relevant to a community, which as I mentioned was a goal of my project. The community of Bowling Green is definitely family oriented. To me health and well-being is a top priority in this type of community if not the top, with the other being education. Those two factors are the very reason I was excited to have Lynnita as a guest on my show. A secondary factor arose during correspondence leading up to the show itself. Lynnita informed me that much of her graduate work was centered on restaurant inspection and cleanliness, and I thought how perfect. Bowling Green is one of the most restaurant heavy cities in America. Having Lynnita on the show gave me an opportunity to learn as well as inform those watching about what goes into restaurant inspections and remind everyone the importance of being healthy.

My second guest on the show was Gil Ouellette. Gil is pursuing a degree in Geoscience. Much of his graduate work is done in and around caves. As I mentioned in the show, I feel there is no area more connected to its geology than south central Kentucky. With the world's longest cave, Mammoth Cave, just up the road, Lost River Cave here in Bowling Green, and more, caves are a vital part of the city's history and culture. Gil is doing his graduate work on the island of Barbados, that's right Barbados, giving yet another for university's motto of "a leading university with international reach." He is working with water resource management in an area where this is of vital

importance. He is examining rainfall patterns and using that info to help the country with their water management.

My third and final guest was James Cottrell a recipient of a Master's Degree in Sport and Recreation Administration from WKU. He is also an instructor of Sports Management here at WKU until the end of the semester when he plans to return to his home state of Colorado to pursue a doctorate degree. James or Jimmy as I refer to him in the show has an interesting background. He was an all-American linebacker at New Mexico State and was signed by the Baltimore Ravens as an undrafted free agent. However his career was cut short by an injury and as he says, "backpedaled" into teaching. His field of study can be applied without leaving campus. WKU has a history of successful athletic programs including conference winners in men's basketball, track and field, and volleyball, in the past year alone. An emerging minor league baseball organization and several solid high school programs also call Bowling Green home making his area of expertise perfect for my show.

With the guests covered that brings us to crew and equipment. My acknowledgements section shows why I chose my setting and crew. The people of WKYU-PBS are nothing short of grade A+ in the quality of product they put out to the public. The fact that they allowed me to use their equipment and staff says they have the confidence in me to put out quality work. It also allowed me to put out the best quality show in terms of video and audio based on the high quality of equipment I had access to. There are two things I want to stress about the production crew for my show. First of all, the six crew members I used are all employed by WKYU-PBS. Not only are they co-workers of mine, but they are all current students here at WKU. My entire show was done

by students. All of this was the pre-production. All of this had to be done in order for my show to happen. With that done it was time for light, camera, action.

CHAPTER 3

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

For the show I set up three cameras, one primarily for the guest, one primarily for me, and the other primarily as a 2-shot of me and each guest. My guests and I were each given equipped with a mic and we hit the ground running. I first did a short intro giving a quick overview of the show which led into segment one with Lynnita. While this show is three segments I feel like it had two phases. During my first segment it quickly became clear to me that Lynnita was very nervous. I could notice her voice shaking and her fidgeting. Her nervousness led to short answers to my questions. I saw a time cue that told me I had quite of bit of time to go and I had a call to make. Do I cut this segment short or do I push through. I chose to push through. While the decision forced me to face some challenges, it allowed me to cover more material with Lynnita I would have otherwise missed. Those challenges and tough decision were phase one. Phase two for me was the second and third segment which I felt couldn't have gone better. Gil was my second guest. We discussed the degree he is pursuing and he explained his graduate work to me in a way that anyone could understand, which I believe is important. You have to make difficult concepts as easy to understand as possible. I personally was interested to learn more about his work in Barbados water resource management and its impact on the island. Gil mentioned in the show that Bowling Green once claimed to have a one million

year old sewer system. That sewer system was the caves that sprawl under the city. Since then countless efforts have been made by scientists, conservationists, and graduate students like Gil to restore and preserve caves for a variety of reasons. That fact is just one example of how important caves are to this area. Gil made my job easy by explain his research and answering all of my questions in-depth, making difficult concepts easy to understand. My third and final guest was Jimmy. I had a connection with Jimmy from when I had him as an instructor in Sports Management. There were a couple reasons I saved him for the end. First and foremost he was the only one of my guests who has already received their degree and is teaching in that field. I also knew due to our connection and mutual love of sports I could fill any remaining time with Jimmy. We were able to discuss two major issues in the world of sports: Title IX compliance and the massive amount of conference realignment going on in the world of sports right now. Following my segment with Jimmy I gave a short outro thanking the guests, my crew, and WKYU. When all was said and done I was proud of the show. While there were a couple of small hang-ups in the first segment I feel that getting through it and turning two great segments after the first shows that I was able to handle adversity and not let it phase me. I can't think of anything I would want to change about what I did with the show. I can say I'm satisfied with this project.

I am currently seeking an outlet for my show to be seen by the public. I have contacted those at WKYU-PBS hoping to post my show to their website. I also found out that with the student newscast being done for the semester there is a chance it may air on television as an educational special. I am also seeking to post on the student run News Channel 12 website showing this work was done by students. At this point I don't know

if or when this will be posted or aired. If none of this is possible I plan to post the show to Youtube.

Finally, I have a few things I want to close with. I am a broadcast news major and I have never had a problem speaking in front of people. Writing papers is not my usual forte. I want to emphasize that my show is the major part of this project for me. It's the type of thing I would like to do again with a different topic. If after reading this you thought, "Hmm, I wish he would've said more about the show," good! That means I did my job. I've informed you enough that you understand the gist of what the show is about. But I have also piqued your interest and now you'll have to watch the show to see more. That's what the broadcast world calls a tease. Tell you enough that you want to continue watching. I would also like to take one more opportunity to thank all those who helped me with this project, and those who may be taking the time to read this, especially my family and friends.

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APPENDIX A

Show Rundown

Intro 0-.5 min.

Segment One Lynrita Glass-Public Health .5-9 min.

Segment Two Gill Oilette-Geology 10-19 min.

Segment Three James Cottrell-Sports Branding and Marketing 20-29.5min

Closing 29.5-30 min.

Equipment

Three Cameras 2 JVC HM750's, Sony XDCAM EX3

Sony AWS-G500E Anycast Station

Audio Mixer

WKYU-PBS WKU set

APPENDIX B

Planned Interview Questions

- Tell me more about your area of study
- Why did you go into your area of study?
- What is/was required to get your degree?
- How does your work relate to this community?
- What is the biggest challenge you've faced in your graduate work?
- What are you hoping to get out of going to graduate school?
- What was the biggest surprise you came across doing your work?